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SUBJECT: The Probable Consequences of a Fifteen or Twenty Percent Reduction in U.S. Funding of The Irregular Program in Laos

1. This memorandum describes the probable effects that a fifteen or twenty percent reduction in [ ] paramilitary program would have on the effectiveness of the irregulars. 25X1

2. In view of the fact that [ ] irregular units are already undermanned and outnumbered by the enemy forces in Laos, a fifteen or twenty percent reduction in material and personnel funding would seriously limit the capabilities of these paramilitary units to achieve even minimum objectives such as the defense of Long Tieng and the harassment of North Vietnamese forces along the trail in South Laos. This ostensibly modest cut in spending for paramilitary activities would also impair the mobility of the irregulars and therefore preclude their timely redeployment in response to military surges by the enemy. 25X1

3. A drawdown on already thinly stretched irregular capabilities would jeopardize the survival of the RLG, thereby increasing the security threat to Thailand and removing RLG sanction for bombing the Ho Chi Minh trail.

4. Aside from the more tangible consequences and regardless of how it was distributed among programs, a fifteen or twenty percent reduction would have a demoralizing effect on the irregulars because it would reflect on the credibility of U.S. commitments.

25X1 5. Even if the [ ] paramilitary program was somehow protected from a fifteen or twenty percent cut, i. e. if the reductions were confined to other programs such as economic assistance, tactical air operations, and support for conventional RLG military units, the irregulars would be seriously affected. The continuation of tactical air support at programmed and hopefully increased levels is absolutely essential to the integrity of and effectiveness of irregular efforts. The conventional RLG military forces perform increasingly valuable offensive and defensive functions and a reduction in their capabilities would shift the burden to the already overcommitted irregular forces.

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6. In short, the irregulars are already so thinly spread that a fifteen or twenty percent cut in support would have a serious effect on their morale as well as capabilities. The irregulars cannot be insulated from cuts in other U. S. supported programs, especially tactical air operations and conventional RLG activities; and even a modest reduction of irregular effectiveness would have far reaching effects on the RLG's prospects for survival, thereby increasing the security threat to Thailand and jeopardizing our options for bombing the trail.

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Statistics listed on the map are current as of September 1971.

Comments:

MR - (Military Region) There are five Military Regions in Laos

FAR - (Forces Armee Royale) The regular forces of the Royal  
Lao Army

FAN - (Forces Armee Neutralist) The pro-government Neutralist  
forces

Total enemy forces in MR's II, III and IV include rear service and support elements responsible for the maintenance and security of road and trail networks.

There are no irregular forces deployed in MR V. The security of this region is the responsibility of FAR and FAN forces.

The Communist Chinese troops in Laos are comprised of infantry, anti-aircraft and engineer units. They are involved in the construction, maintenance and security of the Chicom Road in North Laos.

NOTE: The figure of 15,000 Communist Chinese Personnel in Laos is a conservative estimate; some estimates are as high as 27,000.

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ORDER OF BATTLE FOR LAOS  
SEPTEMBER 1971

	ENEMY FORCES				FRIENDLY FORCES				
	<u>NVA</u>	<u>PL</u>	<u>DN</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>FAR</u>	<u>FAN</u>	<u>IRREG</u>	<u>THAI</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
MR I	4,415	7,305	---	11,720	7,773	700	8,115	583	17,171
MR II	19,517	8,215	2,300	30,032	1,542	700	10,380	3,097	15,719
MR III	31,536	5,100	---	36,636	10,164	---	7,221	---	17,385
MR IV	22,653	5,420	---	28,073	11,308	1,400	5,118	1,628	19,454
MR V	400	780	---	1,180	17,596	2,200	---	---	19,796
TOTALS	78,521	26,820	2,300	107,641	48,383	5,000	30,834	5,308	89,525

COUNTRY-WIDE TOTALS:

<u>ENEMY</u>	-	122,600
NVA	-	78,500
PL/DN	-	29,100
*CHICOM	-	15,000
<u>FRIENDLY</u>	-	84,200
FAR	-	48,400
FAN	-	5,000
IRR.	-	30,800

\*MR-I only

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